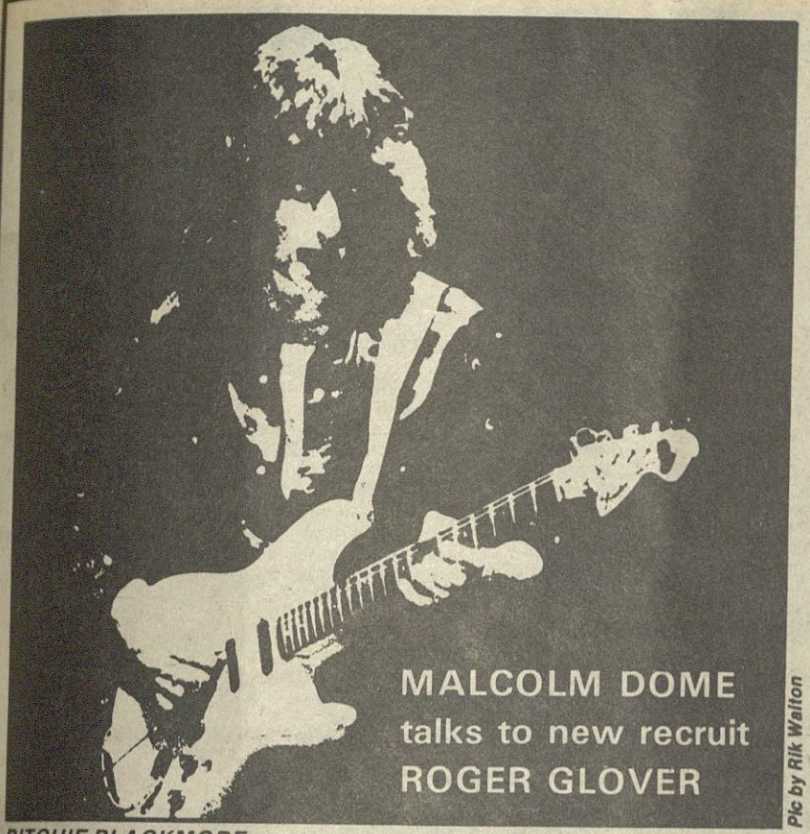

MALCOLM DOME talks to new recruit ROGER GLOVER

Pic by Rik Walton

RITCHIE BLACKMORE

RAINBOW'S RETURN

EVER TRIED conducting a coherent conversation some time after midnight when you're tired and slightly Brahms & Liszt? Believe me it isn't easy, but that's the situation facing me as I set about interviewing Rainbow bassist/producer Roger Glover, two large Baccardi & Cokes beyond 'witching hour'.

We're sitting in my overnight room at the Holiday Inn, about eight miles away from the Newcastle City Hall, where just three hours earlier the band had given a titanic performance of memorable proportions to a capacity crowd of frenzied headbangers for whom heavy metal is more a religion than a pastime. However, the scenes of wild ecstasy, which literally enveloped the venue long after Rainbow had finally left the stage, seem a long way off as we get down to serious talking.

Although he only became a fully-fledged Rainbow member last year when the present and fourth, band line-up got together, Glover had indirect connections with the first incarnation (formed in 1975) being not only an ex-Deep Purple colleague of Ritchie Blackmore's but also the co-producer of the first two albums from Elf, the outfit with whom Blackmore teamed up to launch Rainbow Mk1.

In fact, it's the production side of things which has occupied most of Glover's time since his departure from Purple; the only playing he undertook in the period between leaving Purple and joining Rainbow's battalions was a solo effort called 'Elements' released a couple of years back.

So with his near-complete isolation from the vigours of being on the road over the last few years, I start off by asking him what's been the most difficult part of getting used to the demands of rigorous touring again. "Readjusting myself to the boredom you always come up against on the road," replies Glover. "That was one of the reasons I left Purple, because constant touring is actually numbing, whereas I find being in a studio both inspiring and creative because you're using the brain all the time." Yet despite his long lay-off from active gigging two things that haven't affected Glover so far are lack of sleep and having to snatch meals at odd times of the day and night. "Studio work is very similar in this respect," he explains, "In fact the hours are probably much worse. At least when you're touring you know that once a gig is over, that's it, you can go to bed. However, producing isn't like that because you're never sure when you'll end up finishing. It might be at 11 o'clock at night when the guitarist gets tired or at five in the morning when the vocalist feels inspired."

At this point I switch tack from coping with pressures of touring to the equally large demands on any band to deliver commercial success. The release of 'Since You've Been Gone' as a single from the high-selling album 'Down To Earth' was the signal for many people to accuse Rainbow of commercially selling-out. But Glover's attitude to such criticism is to deny anything of the sort.

"If we had done a disco version of an oldie, then that would have been selling-out, just going for chart success and nothing else but we didn't. I will admit that 'Since You've Been Gone' is right on the edge, yet there's enough of Rainbow in the sound to make it work."

Although he has an obviously pragmatic attitude, Glover does nonetheless believe that rock 'n' roll is too money-orientated "I don't think it's the fault of the bands," he quietly expounds, "basically it can be blamed on our society's way of thinking. As soon as you put money up as a god then everything is gonna suffer, including music.

"In America it's even worse than over here. Radio stations depend on ratings because without high audience figures they don't get the revenue from the big advertisers. Therefore they pick and choose what gets played on the air, which means record companies only put out what will corner airtime, and hence bands are dictated to on what they must produce."

As we move further into the early morning, the interview diverts to Rainbow specifics. What is the relationship, I enquire, between Ritchie Blackmore and the rest of the current band? Glover is open and honest about the position. "Rainbow is Ritchie's band. He is the guiding light and anyone who thinks differently is out on his ear. We all know where we stand, but that's not to say this isn't a collective. The present line-up isn't Ritchie Blackmore plus four backing musicians, as has been the case in the past, and I believe the band therefore to be a strong one, capable of making its mark as a whole unit."

However, when it comes to future plans Glover admits to not knowing how long the current Rainbow quintet will stay together. "That's up to Ritchie alone and to be frank no-one's sure what he's thinking."

Yet, whatever may lie around the corner, Glover's own personal commitment to the band is total. "Rainbow to me is very rewarding at the moment because I'm working as a musician, writer and producer. So therefore all facets of my character are satisfied."

Albums available:
'Rainbow Rising' (Polydor 2490 137)
'On Stage' (Polydor 2657 016)
'Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow' (Polydor 2490 141)
'Long Live Rock 'N' Roll' (Polydor POLD 5002)
'Down To Earth' (Polydor POLD 5023)